

1. CLAIM AMENDMENTS (LISTING OF CLAIMS)

*This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:*

1. (Original) A method for assessing skeletal growth of a subject, comprising measuring the level of NT-CNP in a biological sample from the subject, and comparing the level against the mean NT-CNP level from a control population, where in a significant deviation in the measured level from the mean control level is indicative of abnormal skeletal growth.
2. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, wherein the biological sample is plasma or whole blood.
3. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, where said subject is a pre-adult.
4. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ said subject is a pre-pubescent child or an infant.
5. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~ The method of claim 3, wherein ~~the~~ said subject is a neonate and the sample is a cord blood sample.
6. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5~~ The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ said subject is undergoing a treatment regimen, which may impact on skeletal growth in said subject.

7. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5~~The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the said~~ subject is exposed to chemicals or other external factors which may impact on skeletal growth in said subject.
8. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the said~~ measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and a binding agent that selectively binds NT-CNP.
9. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 8, wherein ~~the said~~ binding agent is an antibody or antibody fragment.
10. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 9, wherein ~~the said~~ binding agent is a monoclonal antibody or monoclonal antibody fragment.
11. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 8, wherein the NT-CNP to which the binding agent selectively binds comprises an antigenic peptide selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81).
12. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 11, wherein the NT-CNP comprises proCNP(1-50).

13. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in any one of claims 8 to 12~~The method of claim 8, wherein binding of NT-CNP is measured using antibodies or antibody fragments that are ~~immobilised~~immobilized to a solid phase.
14. (Currently Amended) A method for predicting the skeletal growth potential of a subject ~~comprising~~comparing measuring the level of NT-CNP in a biological sample from said subject, and ~~comparing~~comprising the level against the mean NT-CNP level of a control population that has attained maximum skeletal growth and predicting from the NT-CNP level in the subject, skeletal growth potential of the subject.
15. (Currently Amended) A method for predicting the skeletal age of a subject comprising measuring the level of NT-CNP in a biological sample from said subject and comparing the level against the mean NT-CNP level of a control population of known skeletal ages, and predicting from the NT-CNP level in the subject, the skeletal age of the subject.
16. (Currently Amended) A method for diagnosing a skeletal disease or disorder in a subject comprising measuring the level of NT-CNP in a biological sample from said subject, and comparing the level against the mean NT-CNP level from a control population, wherein a significant deviation in the measured level from the mean control level is indicative of a skeletal disease or disorder.
17. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in any one of claims 14 to 16~~The method of claim 14, wherein ~~the~~said biological sample is plasma or whole blood.
18. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in any one of claims 14 to 16~~The method of

claim 14, wherein said subject is a pro-adult.

19. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in any one of claims 14 to 16~~The method of claim 14, wherein ~~thesaid~~ subject is a pre-pubescent child or an infant.
20. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 18~~16~~, wherein ~~thesaid~~ subject is a neonate and ~~thesaid biological sample is~~comprises cord blood sample.
21. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in any one of claims 14 to 16~~The method of claim 16, wherein the measuring step comprises detecting binding between NT-CNP and a binding agent that selectively binds NT-CNP.
22. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 21, wherein ~~thesaid~~ binding agent is an antibody or antibody fragment.
23. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 22, wherein ~~thesaid~~ binding agent is a monoclonal antibody or monoclonal antibody fragment.
24. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 21, wherein the NT-CNP to which ~~thesaid~~ binding agent selectively binds comprises an antigenic peptide selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81).

25. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 24, wherein ~~the~~said NT-CNP comprises proCNP(1-50).
26. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in any one of claims 21 to 25~~The method of claim 21, wherein binding of said NT-CNP is measured using antibodies or antibody fragments that are ~~immobilised~~immobilized to a solid phase.
27. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 26, wherein where a significant deviation from the mean control level is found in the sample, the method comprises a further step of comparing the measured NT-CNP level with one or more mean NT-CNP levels from populations having known skeletal diseases or disorders to make a more accurate diagnosis of the specific disease or disorder.
28. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 16, wherein ~~the~~said skeletal disease or disorder is selected from the group ~~comprising~~consisting of congenital disorders, delayed developmental disorders and advanced development syndromes.
29. (Currently Amended) A method of monitoring skeletal growth in a subject, comprising:
- (a) measuring the level of NT-CNP in a first biological sample from ~~the~~said subject and measuring the level of NT-CNP in a second biological sample, wherein ~~the~~said second biological sample is taken from the same subject as ~~the~~said first sample but at a later date; and
- (b) comparing the levels of NT-CNP in said first and said second samples, wherein a

significant change in the level of NT-CNP in said second sample from the level of NT-CNP in said first sample indicates a change in the rate of skeletal growth in said subject.

30. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 29, wherein the~~said~~ subject is undergoing a treatment regimen ~~which~~that may impact ~~on~~ skeletal growth of said subject.
31. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in any one of claims~~The method of claim 6~~and/or claim 30, wherein thesaid treatment regimen involves the administration of glucocorticoids to ~~the~~said subject.~~
32. (Currently Amended) ~~A method as claimed in~~The method of claim 31, wherein the~~said~~ subject is undergoing treatment for asthma or other chronic allergic states.
33. (Currently Amended) A kit for [measuring the level of NT-CNP in a biological sample comprising a binding agent that selectively binds to NT-CNP and which can be quantitatively measured upon binding to NT-CNP.] assessing skeletal growth, diagnosing a skeletal disease or disorder, or predicting skeletal growth potential or skeletal age in a subject, said kit comprising:
- (a) means for measuring the level of NT-CNP in a biological sample obtained from said subject, comprising a binding agent that selectively binds to a NT-CNP molecule selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-50), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81), and which can be used to quantitatively measure NT-CNP; and
- (b) instructions for assessing or monitoring said skeletal growth, predicting said skeletal

growth potential or said skeletal age, or diagnosing said skeletal disease or disorder in said subject from the NT-CNP level measured in said biological sample.

34. (Currently Amended) ~~A kit as claimed in~~The kit of claim 33, wherein ~~the~~said binding agent is selected from the group ~~comprising~~consisting of an anti-NT-CNP antibody, an NT-CNP receptor, ~~or~~and functional fragments or combinations thereof.
35. (Currently Amended) ~~A kit as claimed in~~The kit of claim 34, wherein ~~the~~said binding agent is a monoclonal antibody or a fragment thereof.
36. (Currently Amended) ~~A kit as claimed in claim 35, wherein the antibody is an antibody raised against an NT-CNP molecule selected from the group consisting of proCNP(1-103), proCNP(1-150), proCNP(1-81), and proCNP(51-81)~~An NT-CNP binding agent that selectively binds proCNP (1-50) or proCNP(1750).

37-43. (Canceled)